

# ! NETWORK !

➔ Newsletter for Greenpeace activists

March 2009



[www.greenpeace.org.uk/active](http://www.greenpeace.org.uk/active)



## INTERNATIONAL



Greenpeace ship the Arctic Sunrise arrives in the DRC's main timber export harbour.

### DRC forests still under threat

Belinda Fletcher, forest campaign

In October, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) government announced the results of a three year review of the country's timber industry, cancelling many logging contracts as a result. Companies were then allowed to appeal against the decisions and in January, the government announced the final results.

The good news is that the government rejected 68 out of 87 appeals – a sign that it is starting to take a stand against the logging industry and protect the forest and the communities that rely on it. But it has gone against its own advisors who recommended that new long term logging areas be reduced to 4.4 million hectares. The government has approved 65 new contracts totalling over 9 million hectares – more than double the recommended area.

Worse still, some companies have been allowed to keep logging titles they obtained illegally after the moratorium on the issuing of new contracts was introduced in 2002. Swiss-based Danzer Group (the focus of our report revealing how companies in the DRC are evading tax) and Liechtenstein-based Nordsüdtimber Group both managed to keep hundreds of thousands of hectares of forest that they grabbed illegally in spite of the moratorium.

In cancelling these contracts, the DRC government has taken some positive action to protect the forest and now needs to develop alternatives to industrial logging. But as we go to print, there is new cause for concern. The Environment Minister has revealed plans to cut taxes and fees for logging companies and has even threatened to give some of the cancelled titles back to the logging companies, which could increase logging areas to 12 million hectares.

The government must resist pressure from international timber companies, uphold the moratorium and ensure that areas where contracts have been cancelled are prioritised for protection.



Above: The Drax 29, arrested for stopping a train from delivering coal to Drax power station last year, await trial this summer.  
Below: Local campaigners demonstrate their opposition to the Ffos-y-Fran open cast coal mine near Merthyr Tydfil in South Wales

## From strength to strength

Emma Gibson, climate campaign

As the decision on Kingsnorth looms, groups opposing new coal developments are continuing to spring up around the country.

Yorkshire Against New Coal (YANC) have been especially active. In November, a YANC representative not only attended a cabinet meeting in Leeds, but directly and publicly challenged Gordon Brown on his government's coal policy.

In February, YANC released the results of their opinion survey showing that 71% of people in West Yorkshire want the Ferrybridge coal-fired power station to be replaced with renewable energy when it closes in 2015. That figure went up to 72% in Ed Miliband's constituency of Doncaster.

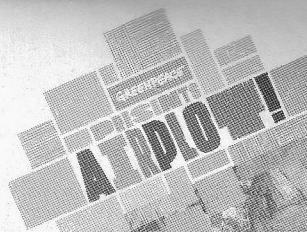
Meanwhile, just six months after Nottinghamshire Against New Coal (NANC) set up their group, they won their campaign to stop half a million tonnes of coal being recovered from a spoil heap at the closed down Langton colliery.

The North East is fast becoming a hotbed of anti-coal activity. Panic Stations have coordinated a broad coalition including local residents, church leaders and NGOs, to oppose the proposed new coal-fired power station at Blyth. The North East Opencast Coal Action Group are also in the process of relaunching.

As the Prime Minister prepares to make the fateful decision on Kingsnorth, we can only expect to see more activity from both local and national groups. With the government's reputation on tackling climate change in tatters over their decision on Heathrow, we will be working hard to convince Gordon Brown to make the right decision on Kingsnorth.

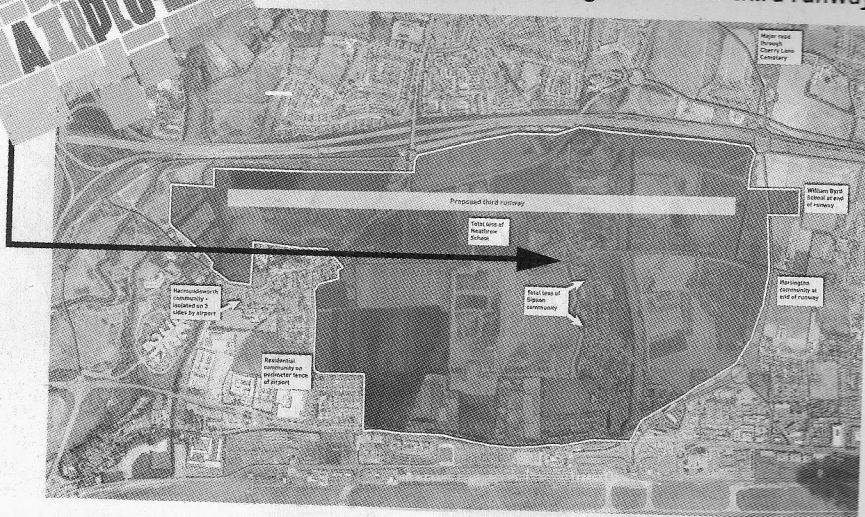






# STOP AIRPORT EXPANSION

Tackling climate change means no third runway



Cover: 'We've bought the land and we're not giving it back!'

Above: The Airplot land is right at the centre of the area that BAA and the government want to develop.

## Airplot – the plot thickens

Vicky Wyatt, climate campaign

Since the excitement of Airplot's launch in January, we have had an overwhelming response from people across the UK and beyond. At the latest count, 36,902 people had signed up to become beneficial owners and this number is rising every day.

On Saturday 7 February residents of Sipson – the now famous village that will be flattened if a third runway at Heathrow goes ahead – gathered on the land for residents' day. It was an opportunity for us to get to know our new neighbours and the positive response from local people was overwhelming. So many locals told us that they now feel more optimistic knowing the sheer scale of opposition that the government and BAA faces.

Political pressure on the government is still going strong too. As last month's Network went to print, the Conservatives had succeeded in securing a vote in the House of Commons giving MPs the chance to vote on the proposed new runway. In advance of the vote, we asked activists to send an email to the 57 Labour MPs who have spoken out against the third runway in the past. Again the response was incredible – thousands of emails swamped MPs' inboxes urging them to stick to their principles and vote against the government.

The vote was incredibly close with 28 Labour MPs rebelling and a handful more abstaining. Gordon Brown was, ironically, forced to fly absent loyal Labour MPs back to Westminster in time for the vote. To ensure that Labour avoided a humiliating defeat, he also had to persuade Democratic Unionist MPs to support the government. Unfortunately, because the vote was forced by the Conservatives, many Labour MPs refused to support it on principle – they will not vote for opposition motions. As such, many of these MPs ended up voting for the third runway, even if they disagreed.

However, the Labour rebellion is the largest of its kind since the party came to power. Even over the highly emotive issue of Iraq, only 12 Labour MPs rebelled against the government. Clearly, Heathrow expansion is a critical political issue, and supporting it is going to come at a high cost for the government.

### ➡ GET ACTIVE!

**Join Airplot and help fight airport expansion**

Networks will receive the second instalment of campaign materials in April. Meanwhile, you can visit the new Airplot website at [www.airplot.org.uk](http://www.airplot.org.uk) to keep up to date.

## SPOTLIGHT



More accustomed to the cold snap than his British counterparts, Wilfried took some snaps of his own during his UK visit.

**Active supporter Wilfried Ahrens from Greenpeace Germany came to the UK to join January's network coordinators' skillshare. He shares his impressions here.**

### How did you first get involved?

About 15 years ago I started supporting Greenpeace financially. Then, we switched to Greenpeace Energy to have renewable electricity. About a year ago I joined the Cologne group to be an active supporter.

### Tell us some facts and figures.

We've got about 90 networks throughout Germany which are coordinated by our Hamburg headquarters. In addition, we have around 25 networks with groups of older volunteers – Team 50 plus. Then we have about 40 youth groups with some autonomy to support Greenpeace in their own way; and about 1000 Greenteams – independent children's teams that we support but who use their own ideas to protect animals, ancient forests or stop pollution.

### What did you most enjoy about your visit to the Greenpeace UK skillshare?

Hearing successes! I was impressed by the Dove work, your creativity and persistence to change the company's attitude to rainforest destruction. I was emotionally touched by Airplot and enjoyed your hospitality, the social events and how much you are interested in our experiences.

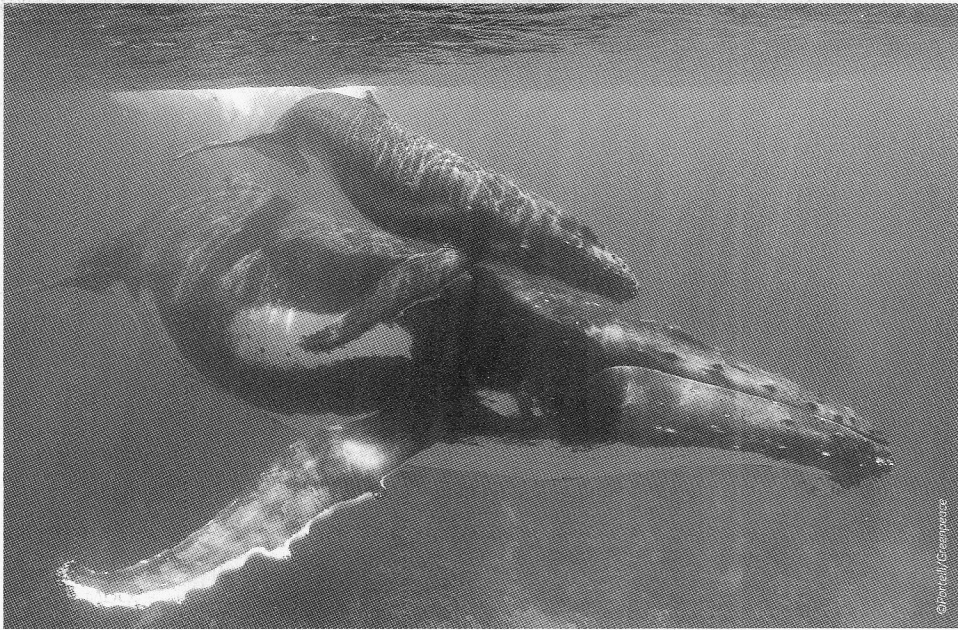
### Is there one thing that we do here that you would like to see Greenpeace Germany do?

A national campaign would be helpful as our focus is on smaller campaigns this year. We could lobby MPs more and we're less focused on social events.

### And what do you think GP UK should do?

Take a bit of a risk and trust your supporters and activists even more. Greenpeace volunteers are usually very reliable people, seriously committed to their objectives. Also, it helps to have members of networks working on their own activities between larger national campaigns.





The humpback whale's future continues to be threatened by pro-whaling countries.

## World focus on whaling

Willie Mackenzie, oceans campaign

We are heading towards another International Whaling Commission meeting in June which will take place in Madeira, Portugal. This year is extremely important to the future of whaling as it will reveal the results of a whaling review by a working group of pro and anti-whaling countries. The group has been meeting regularly since last year with the intention of coming up with a suggested way forward to break the current deadlock between whalers and conservation minded countries like the UK.

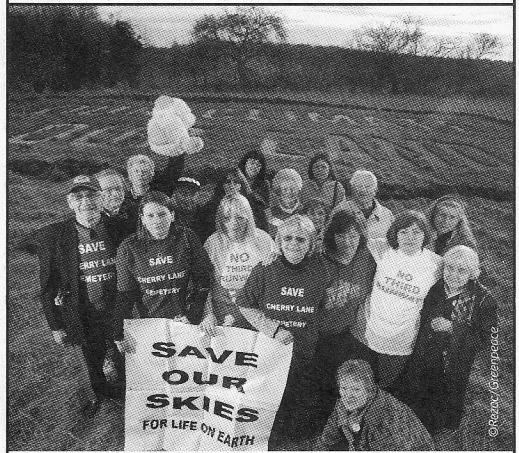
The main concern is that, despite what has the potential to be a positive process, there is yet to be any evidence of commitment to compromise from the whalers. Not only have Japanese whaling fleets set sail again to kill whales in the Southern Ocean whale sanctuary, but they have also refused to be part of any agreement that would force them to give up their Antarctic hunt.

We have been continuing our work to change the Japanese government's pro-whaling stance. Last month, we opened a communications centre in Aomori – the main whaling area and the place where our two Japanese activists will stand trial for their part in exposing last year's scandal around smuggled whale meat. This new centre allows us to ensure that our work to stop whaling, as well as broader oceans issues like overfishing and marine reserves, is taken straight to the place where decisions are made and pressure generated. As Japanese culture makes it very difficult to take direct action, Greenpeace is in a fortunate position in that it is the only organisation able to work so closely to decision makers. However, the trial of the two activists Junichi Sato and Toru Suzuki has been delayed again, possibly until May or June. During this time, we are determined to keep the focus not only on these two brave activists, but also on the real issue of whaling. We will be working hard to ensure that commercial whaling is on trial – not just Junichi and Toru.

Meanwhile in Iceland, the outgoing Fisheries' Minister has taken advantage of the political and economic turmoil to announce a huge increase in Iceland's commercial whaling quota. His misleading promise that this will help the economy by creating jobs is based on a non-existent export market to Japan. Not only does this make no sense in its own right, it is also hugely damaging to Iceland's tourism and whale watching industries. Whaling will clearly be a key issue in the forthcoming elections in Iceland in the spring.

For updates on Greenpeace's work to bring an end to commercial whaling – check the Greenpeace website.

## TALK TALK



Local residents from the village of Sipson supporting Airplot to stop Heathrow expansion.

**Meet Greenpeace evening in Stirling, Friday 13 March, 7.30pm.** Come along to find out more about Greenpeace and how you can get involved. To book a place, contact [daveocarroll@hotmail.com](mailto:daveocarroll@hotmail.com).

### Skillshares:

**Nottingham, Saturday 28 March, 10.30am–5.30pm.** All active supporters from the East Midlands region are welcome to come along and join in at the County Hall. Contact Jane Burd: [greenpeacenotts@gmail.com](mailto:greenpeacenotts@gmail.com) by 16 March to book places.

**Southampton, Saturday 28 March.** A chance for Hampshire, Sussex, Dorset, Surrey, Wiltshire and Berkshire active supporters to share ideas, plans and successes and learn about Greenpeace's current work. Contact Dave at [dshubble@yahoo.com](mailto:dshubble@yahoo.com) for more details or to book a place.

### ACTIVE SUPPORTER NETWORK OVERVIEW

Greenpeace's active supporter network is made up of network coordinators, local networks and individual active supporters. Today we have 105 network coordinators, 90 networks and 23,338 active supporters.

### CONTACT DETAILS

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